

Fall 2022 Commute Survey Results Summary Report

March 28, 2023

The Office of Transportation & Mobility

The Office of Data & Strategic Analytics

Introduction

The Office of Transportation & Mobility in partnership with the Office of Data & Strategic Analytics conducted a survey in November 2022 to determine the commute and transportation practices of the Vanderbilt University community. In 2019, a similar commute survey informed goals for MoveVU. [MoveVU](#) is Vanderbilt's strategic transportation and mobility plan that falls under the [FutureVU](#) comprehensive campus planning efforts. It is a highly collaborative partnership of Vanderbilt's School of Engineering, the Division of Administration and the Office of Transportation & Mobility. The vision of MoveVU calls for a transformation in how the Vanderbilt community commutes to campus, with less reliance on single-occupancy vehicles and parking lots and a greater focus on sustainable commute modes and green spaces.

Much has changed in worldwide commuting patterns since 2019. The 2022 commute survey results have increased the understanding of the Vanderbilt community's current commuting patterns and will help inform updates to the MoveVU goals. The feedback received will also help shape mobility and transportation programming and help determine the most effective programs to support the community.

Moving forward, a commute survey will be sent every fall to enable the Office of Transportation & Mobility to track the results of the MoveVU efforts and how transportation and commute patterns change over time.

Survey Methodology

The Fall 2022 Commute Survey had a 41 percent response rate.

The 2022 commute survey was sent to all faculty, staff, graduate/professional and postdoctoral students, a total of 13,090 people. The Office of Transportation & Mobility and the Office of Data & Strategic Analytics received, 5,413 responses (partial completes included), a 41 percent response rate. The staff/faculty/postdocs had a 54 percent response rate while graduate/professional students had a 30 percent response rate.

This response rate indicates that this topic is top-of-mind and of interest to a large portion of the Vanderbilt community. This response rate is in range with recent past DSA survey efforts.

Demographics of participants and limitations of the sample.

Participation was high in several business units (>70 percent), while other units showed lower participation rates (e.g., Business Services and Facilities). The Office of Transportation & Mobility

anticipated that employees within Facilities and Vanderbilt Public Safety might have a lower response rate, since many employees’ job functions within these business units do not require regular use of a computer and email. The Office of Transportation & Mobility worked with supervisors within these units to encourage participation.

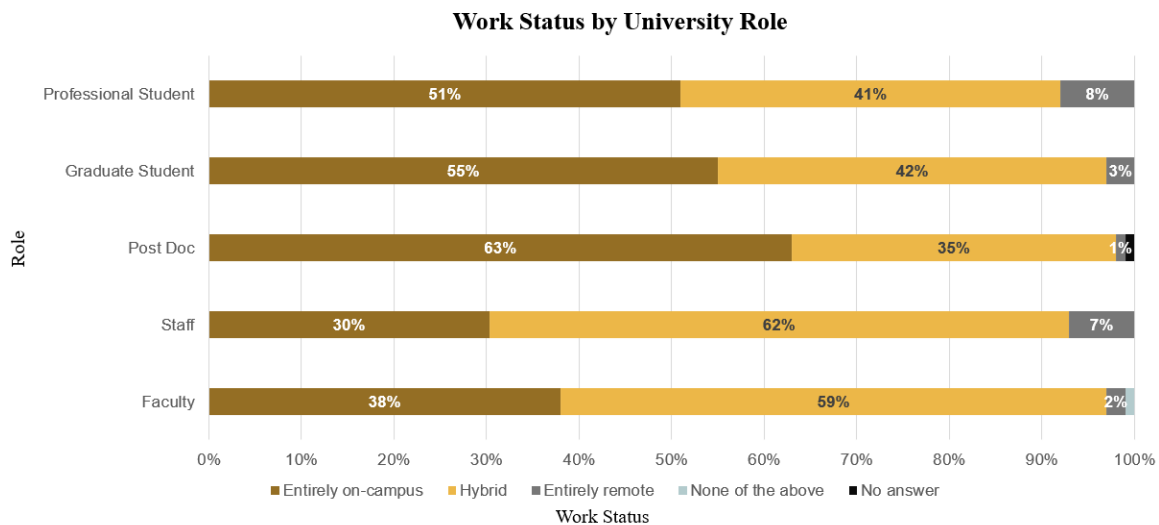
The proportions of Black and international respondents were lower than those of the overall population, while the proportion of White respondents in the sample was higher. The middle two pay bands were more represented in the survey sample, compared with the lower and upper bands.

The Office of Transportation & Mobility will partner with the Office of Data & Strategic Analytics to conduct qualitative research to address gaps in responses from some business units, including Facilities and Business Services.

Key Findings

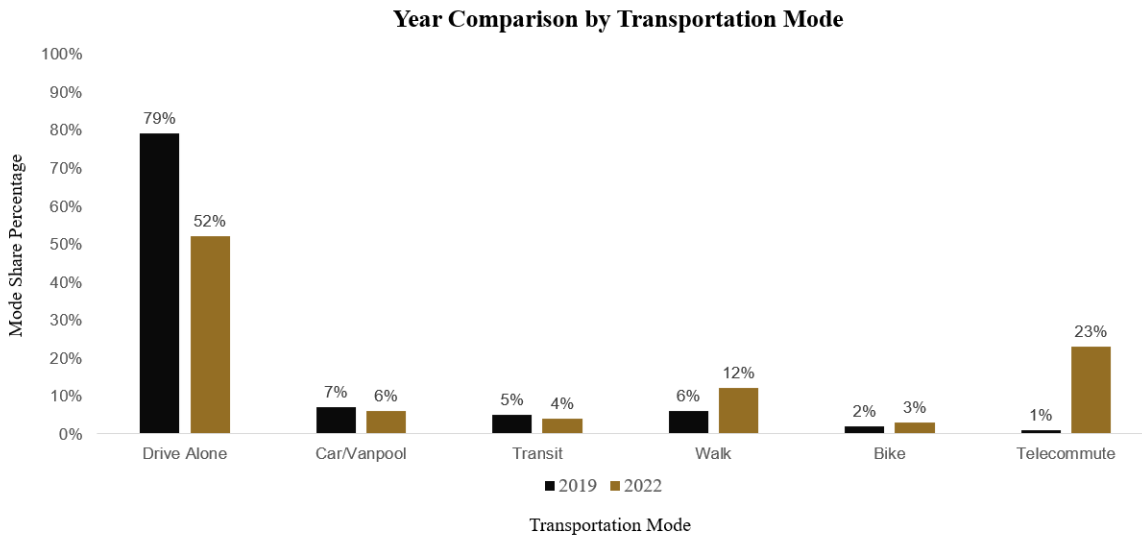
53 percent of respondents reported being “hybrid.”

Overall, 40 percent of respondents reported they worked entirely on campus, and 53 percent selected “hybrid” as their work status. The type of work status reported depended on one’s role at the university. Staff are less likely to work entirely on-campus compared with other roles. Postdocs, graduate students and professional students are more likely to report being entirely on-campus than faculty and staff. At the same time, staff are more likely to report entirely remote status relative to faculty and graduate students.



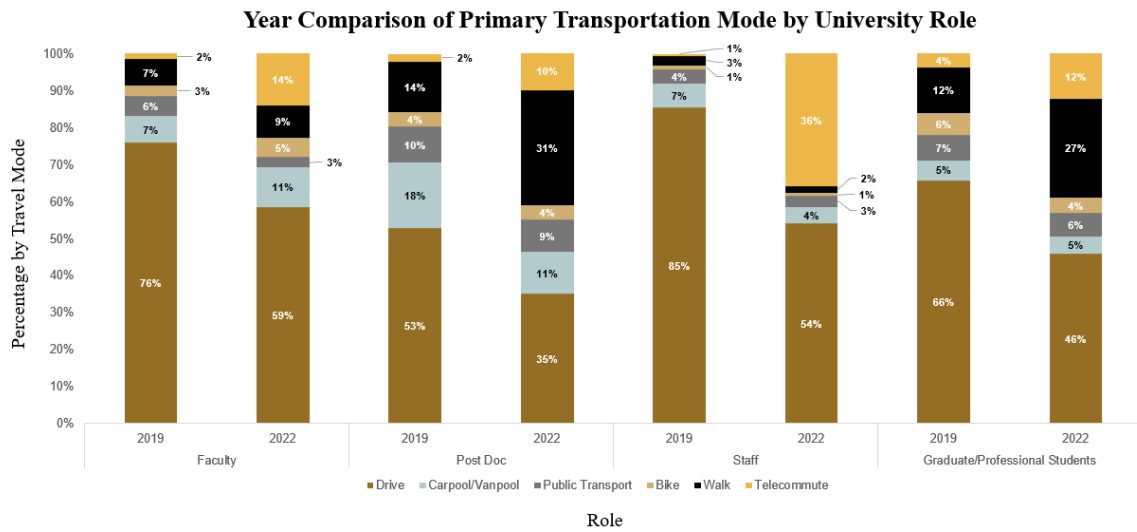
12 percent of respondents say walking is their primary mode of transportation to campus.

Compared with 2019, the percent of commuters driving alone to work decreased from 79 percent of all commuters to 52 percent. The percent of commuters reporting walking as their primary mode of transportation increased from 6 percent to 12 percent.



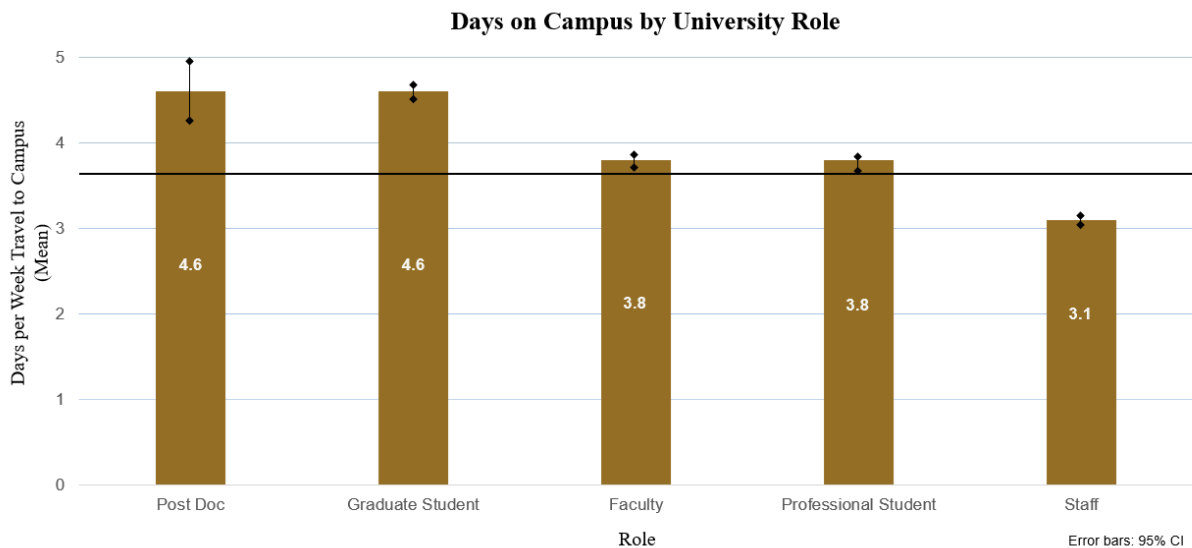
While 12 percent exceeds the original MoveVU 2025 goal to achieve 10 percent walking mode share, differences in how “hybrid” and “telecommute” options were presented to survey respondents may account for some of the increase. Due to the shift and increase of the hybrid work arrangements, telework was not included as an option in the 2022 survey. To account for this difference and to allow for a more direct comparison to 2019 survey data, the survey administrator defined and labeled people as “telecommuters” if they selected “entirely remote” as their work status or reported telecommuting three or more times per week. Based on this definition, 23 percent were telecommuting in 2022 vs. 1 percent in 2019.

For graduate/professional students and postdocs, the mode share for walking increased from 2019 to 2022. The other mode shares for all other university roles appear relatively consistent between the two survey years.



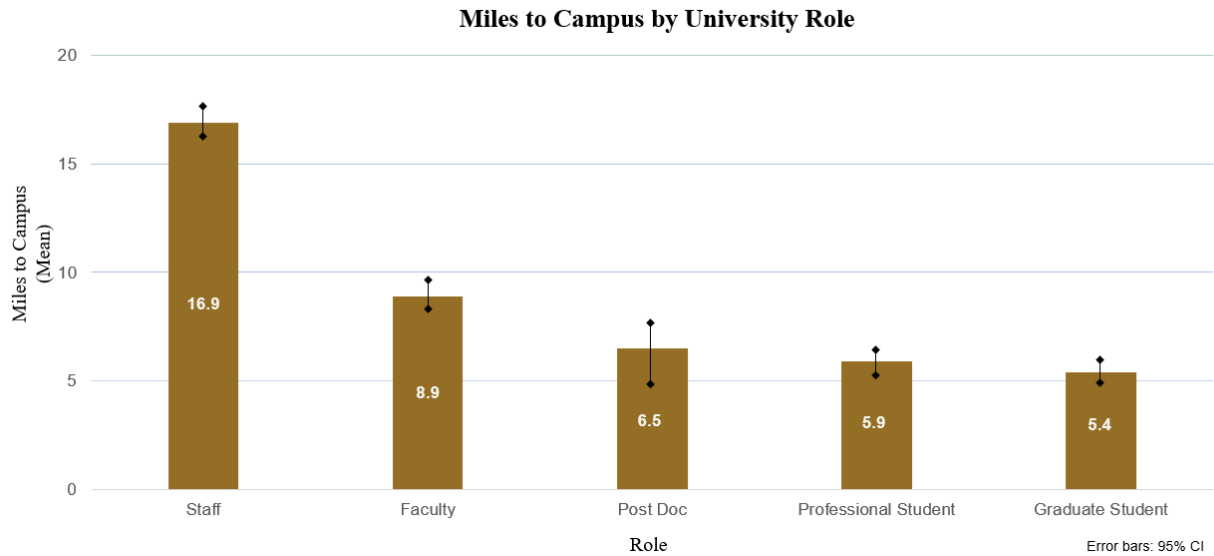
Staff have the longest commutes but are on campus (on average) fewer days per week.

On average, people travel to campus 3.6 days/week. On average, postdocs and graduate students travel to campus more than the other four roles. Faculty and professional students travel to campus more than staff, but they do not differ from each other. Staff telecommute more than the other four roles (who do not differ from each other in telecommuting).

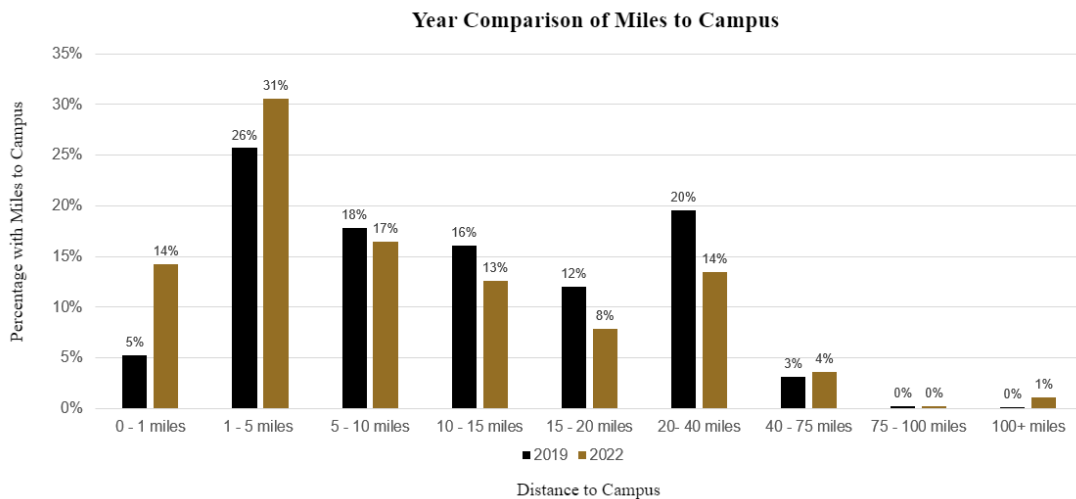


45 percent of respondents reported commuting less than 5 miles (one way).

Staff, on average, commute longer distances than the other four groups (average 16.9 miles one-way). Professional (5.9 miles) and graduate students (5.4 miles) have shorter commutes relative to faculty and staff.

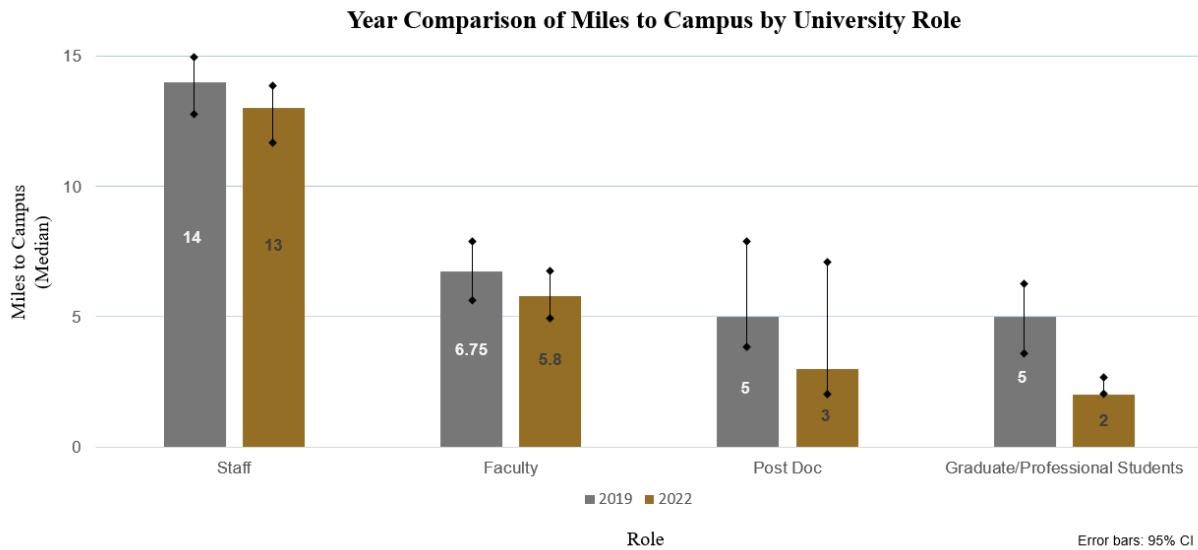


Descriptively, 2022's sample reported slightly shorter commutes than the 2019 sample in terms of miles traveled, but this difference was most significant for graduate/professional students and postdocs.



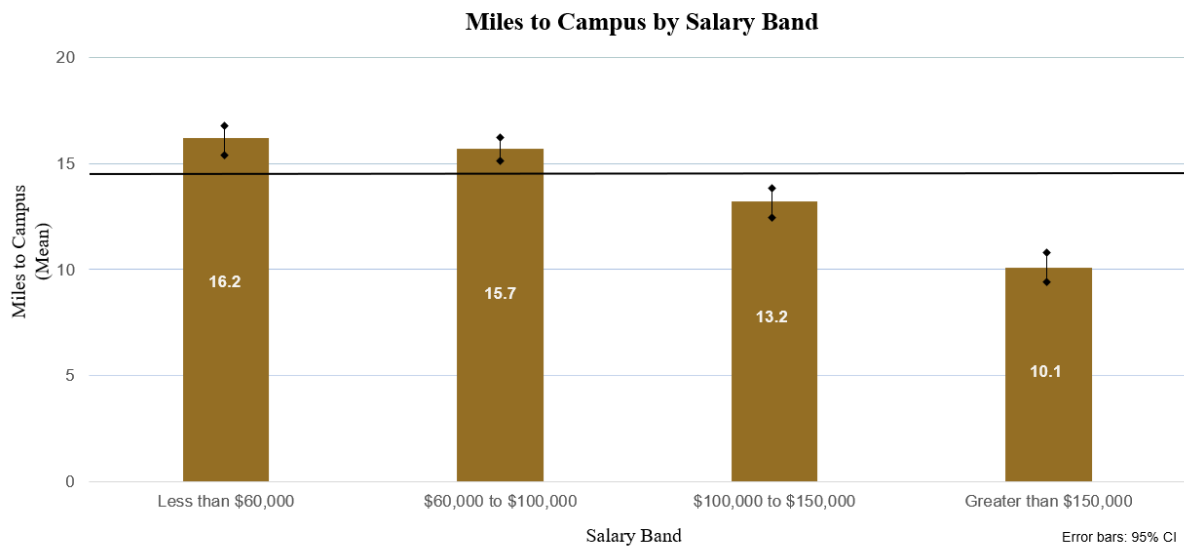
The average distance to campus seemed to decrease from 2019 to 2022, but this was most noticeable among graduate/professional students and postdocs. To investigate this trend further, the Office of Data & Strategic Analytics used address records to estimate distance to campus (miles) and commute times

of 7,242 graduate/professional students (4,070 in 2019 and 3,990 in 2022). These results show no significant change in distance or commute times from 2019 to 2022 for graduate/professional students overall. Descriptively, the mean and median distance to campus shows a slight decrease from 2019 to 2022, but more longitudinal results are needed to account for the evolving housing/commute landscape in Nashville. The address and survey data both have missing values, so future work should estimate how non-responders possibly differ.



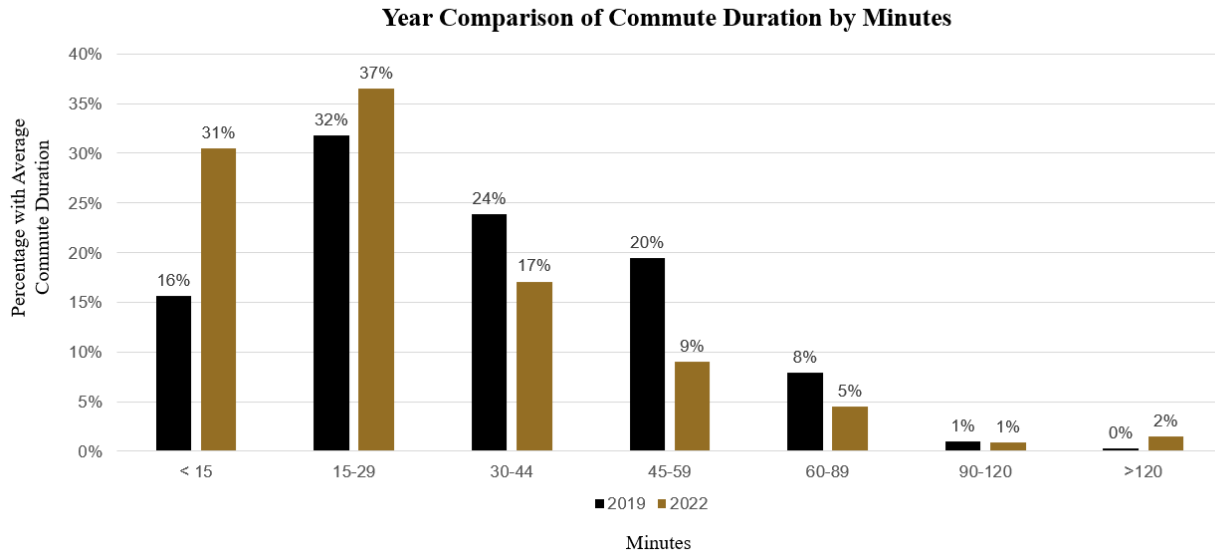
Higher paid employees have shorter commutes.

Employees, faculty and staff in the lower two pay bands have a longer commute than those in the higher two pay bands.

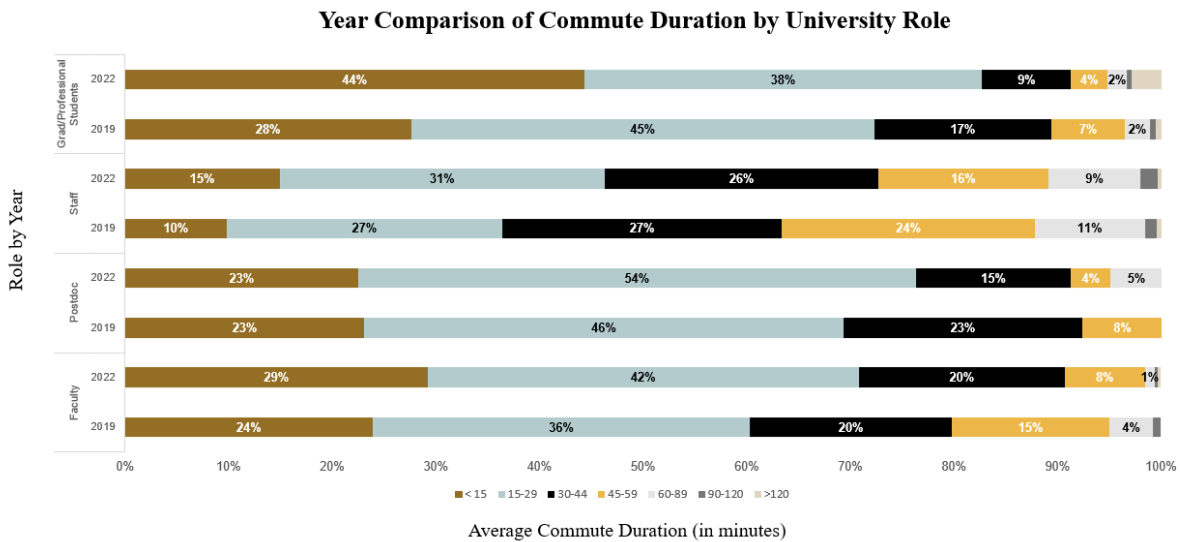


63 percent of respondents commute less than 30 minutes (one way).

Descriptively, 2022’s sample reported shorter commutes than the 2019 sample—more people selected less than 15 minutes and fewer selected 45–60 minutes.

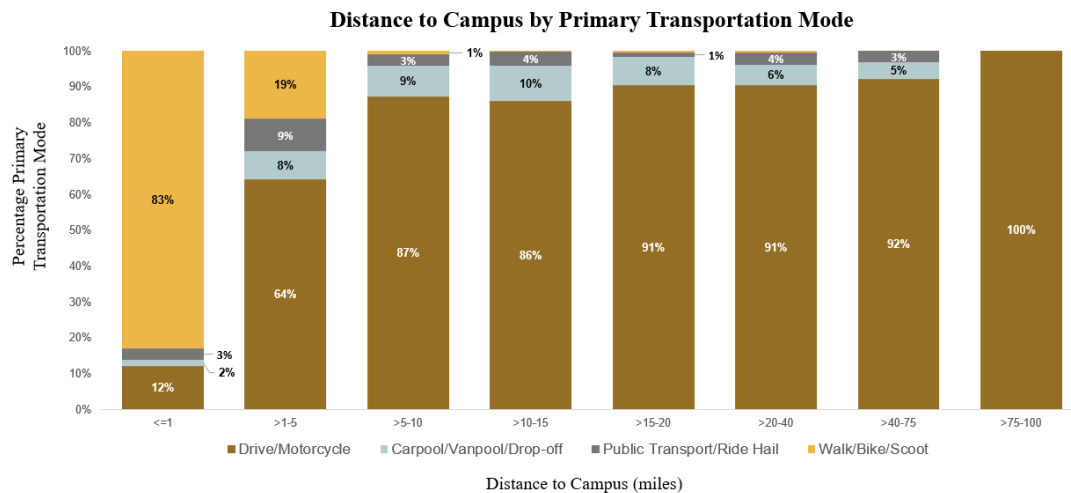


Staff were more likely to report longer commute times than faculty, postdocs and graduate/professional students. A higher proportion of staff reported commutes lasting 30–44 minutes, 45–59 minutes and 60–89 minutes relative to faculty, postdocs and graduate students. Graduate/professional students were more likely to have a less than 15-minute commute compared with staff and faculty.



Recommendation to market transportation options to the 61 percent who live within 10 miles.

While the Office of Transportation & Mobility understands that sustainable commute options are not an option for everyone, 45 percent of respondents reported commuting less than 5 miles (one way) to campus, and 61 percent reported a commute of less than 10 miles (one way). In the future, the Office of Transportation & Mobility will consider targeting programs as well as marketing and communications efforts, to those commuting less than 10 miles (one way) to encourage use of sustainable modes, including using the WeGo benefit, the bike share system and walking.



MoveVU, Vanderbilt's Transportation Demand Management Program

Recognizing its prominent role as an innovation engine and one of the largest employers in Middle Tennessee, Vanderbilt has committed to rethinking its approach to transportation.

MoveVU, built on the foundation laid by FutureVU, is that new approach.

In pursuit of the FutureVU goals, the Office of Transportation & Mobility was created in 2018 to implement a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management program, detailed in [MoveVU](#), Vanderbilt's strategic transportation and mobility plan. MoveVU elaborates upon the transportation-focused components of the broader FutureVU goals. MoveVU goals align with Vanderbilt's overarching sustainability strategy to beautify the campus, expand green spaces, create a walkable and sustainable campus and reduce carbon emissions from vehicles.

The Office of Transportation & Mobility has prioritized three core programs related to parking and commute behaviors:

- MoveVU Commute Hub – Launched in February 2020, the Commute Hub provides a website and mobile app that helps commuters track their trips and connect to other carpoolers and vanpoolers.

- Daily Parking Program – Daily parking was introduced in September 2020. The daily parking program currently has over 2,600 community members participating. Historically, all university parking permits were purchased annually. Rather than paying a flat annual fee, which provides parking access evenly across the year, parkers in the daily parking program only pay for days that they park on campus, increasing the financial motivation associated with considering other modes on any given day. Users can see their parking deductions and receive statements that summarize their trips and parking charges in the MoveVU Commute Hub.
- Commute Incentives – Incentive payments for sustainable commutes launched in September 2021. Commuters who take a sustainable commute such as walking, biking or riding the bus will receive a 50-cent incentive. These incentives are applied to faculty and staff's paychecks and graduate students' Commodore Cards.

Vanderbilt's comprehensive TDM program also provides commuter benefits, including free transit passes that allow all students, faculty and staff to ride WeGo and RTA free of charge, a guaranteed ride home program, and access to commute planning assistance from a Commute Concierge. Demonstrating the success of these programs, commuting emissions decreased 25 percent in FY2022 compared with FY2021, and 58 percent compared with FY2020. This decrease reflects the Vanderbilt community's shift in commuting and remote work patterns.

In addition to encouraging use of sustainable transportation modes through these TDM strategies, Vanderbilt has committed to making infrastructure improvements that facilitate the use of sustainable transportation options for commute trips and for greater on-campus mobility.

Vanderbilt is planning and has partially constructed a "Walk-and-Roll" loop around the campus edge, providing a comfortable walking/biking transition to the broader Nashville transportation network.

Parking Policy

Campus parking—because of its inefficient use of spaces and high property value—was identified as an underutilized asset while implementing FutureVU and MoveVU strategies. While the VU parking lots and garages have transformed as the VU campus has transformed, there is still enough parking for everyone on campus. As recently as 2018, Vanderbilt had one parking space per faculty, staff and student. This ratio is highly unusual among universities, and MoveVU is rightsizing the parking needs to use spaces more times throughout a single day.

Understandably, with the major capital construction projects in recent years, along with MoveVU's efforts to rightsize the parking inventory, for some members of the Vanderbilt community, parking is no longer close to their building. Some parking requires a longer walk, a need to factor in more time into one's commute and additional distance for those with mobility needs. In 2019, Parking Services began offering the Mobility Rides service to help get people from their parking space to where they need to go.

Vanderbilt University has a complex parking management system for permitting, payment and enforcement, which is tied to multiple automated IT systems. The Transportation & Mobility Standing Committee is evaluating options for a more flexible parking system to support the guiding principles of FutureVU and goals of MoveVU. The goals of the recommendations of the Standing Committee are that any recommended changes to the parking system be:

1. budgeted with future parking rate increases
2. implemented within institutional budget planning processes
3. technology-based, leveraging new applications and less reliant on physical infrastructure
4. aligned with university values emphasizing equity while promoting sustainable commutes
5. streamlined to make daily decisions about parking options easier

Over the next fiscal year, the Transportation & Mobility Standing Committee will use the results of the commute survey to help develop a blueprint to transition Vanderbilt's parking into a more simplified and dynamic system with recommendations for parking technology, parking policies, mobility programs and communication solutions. Recommendations will build upon anticipated parking rate changes for the 2023–24 academic year, and recommendations will be phased based on institutional budgeting processes that are typically performed six months to one year in advance.

Conclusions & Next Steps

The Office of Transportation & Mobility will continue exploring the initial findings from this survey by conducting additional research, communicating with various existing committees, including the Transportation & Mobility Standing Committee, and using the resulting feedback to shape outreach and marketing programs.

As the campus transforms based on FutureVU and MoveVU plans, there is a strong need to understand mobility challenges and the role that programs and transit services can fulfill. Identifying these challenges and considering how they affect Vanderbilt's values involving equity and inclusion will be vital to ensuring that campus infrastructure and mobility programs work for all people.